

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Jasmine Garcia, and I am a student at Yale University. I am a first-generation American and my parents immigrated to the U.S. at a young age.

I stand in support of HB 6616 and the effort to expand access to HUSKY regardless of immigration status and age. If Connecticut wants a future that includes healthy families and a stable, thriving, and growing workforce that is ready to meet the needs of our future, Connecticut must ensure that these individuals have access to health coverage. Expanding access to HUSKY is an important step toward this future.

Currently, despite paying over half a billion dollars in taxes annually, undocumented immigrants are barred from accessing the very programs their taxes fund, like HUSKY. As a result, 58% of the 113,000 undocumented immigrants in Connecticut are uninsured, a vast number in comparison to the 5.9% uninsured rate all across Connecticut. This is a clear disparity in coverage and a health equity issue. The United States' per capita healthcare spending is above the average of peer countries, and it fares worse on many health outcomes, including overall life expectancy. This paradox can only be addressed by expanding access to primary care for everyone. No one should have to forego needed medical treatments or skip a preventative care visit, because of lack of insurance.

As the daughter of immigrants and in my own community including many immigrant families, I have witnessed firsthand the barrier to opportunity and equal living that immigrants face. In the last year I underwent a lower body surgery that alone cost \$50,000 plus testing and evaluations both before and after surgery AND physical therapy. Although my family did not face an enormous monetary burden because of our access to healthcare and insurance—without this, I would be left with only two choices: sacrifice regaining my full mobility and health or allow my parents to accrue enormous debt that my family cannot handle.

Yet these choices happen every day for immigrants without access to healthcare programs. For even more immediate and consequential health issues, many families are unable to access health care and insurance. Healthcare is a human right because no family nor person should have to worry about acquiring basic medication and medical help due to their immigration status.

I support expanding HUSKY to all regardless of age and immigration status, and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation.

Thank you for your time,
Jasmine Garcia